

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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-----040773 131401Z /46

O R 131302Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3591
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION USUN
USMISSION SIANI
DIA WASHDC

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 7459

EXDIS

MILITARY ADDRESSEE HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, MOPS, UN, LE, IS, PLO, SY
SUBJECT: JUNE 8 IDF RAID AND ISRAELI OPTIONS IN THE EVENT
OF FUTURE ATTACKS FROM LEBANON

REF: TEL AVIV 7318

1. THERE ARE SEVERAL SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT CONCERNING
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THE REASON FOR THE ISRAELI RAID OF 8 JUNE, THE TIMING
OF THAT ACTION AND POSSIBLE RESULTS. THE MOST POPULAR
RATIONALE FOR THE RAID IS THAT THE GOI WANTED TO PROVE
TO THE ISRAELI MAN ON THE STREET THAT THE PRESENCE OF
UNIFIL IN SOUTHERN LEBANON, COMBINED WITH THE
ANNOUNCED IDF INTENTION TO WITHDRAW FROM LEBANON
(13 JUNE), HAS NOT TIED THE HANDS OF THE MILITARY AND

THAT THE CAPABILITY AND WILL TO ATTACK TERRORISTS BASES CONTINUES TO EXIST. THE SAME SCHOOL BELIEVES THAT THE RAID WAS ALSO DESIGNED TO PROVE THAT ISRAELI INTELLIGENCE CONTINUES TO MAINTAIN ITS CAPABILITY TO PENETRATE, EVALUATE AND TARGET WITH A HIGH DEGREE OF ACCURACY.

2. A SECOND SCHOOL, TO WHICH ARMA BELONGS, BELIEVES THAT ONLY AN UNFORTUNATE STROKE OF BAD LUCK REQUIRED THE GOI TO ANNOUNCE THAT THE RAID HAD TAKEN PLACE. IT IS CONSIDERED THAT THE RAID WAS PROMPTED BY HARD INTELLIGENCE CONCERNING THE LOCATION OF AND ACTIVITY AT THE FATAH BASE AND SUFFICIENT INDICATORS THAT A TERRORIST ATTACK ATTEMPT WAS IMMINENT, MEANING SHORTLY AFTER 13 JUNE. THE RAID, WHICH HAD ALL THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A "RAFUL" (CHIEF OF STAFF EITAN) PLANNED EVENT, WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED IF THE ZERO CASUALTY EXPECTATION HAD INDEED HELD TRUE. HOWEVER, THE EXPLOSION, WHICH KILLED TWO OFFICERS AND WOUNDED EIGHT OTHER MEN, FORCED THE IDF TO ACKNOWLEDGE BOTH THE RAID AND THE CASUALTIES.

3. REGARDLESS OF THE INTENTION TO PUBLICIZE OR NOT PUBLICIZE THE EVENT, THERE WAS A SIGNAL INTENDED AND THE ADDRESSEE WAS FATAH. WITH ITS STRIKE, ISRAEL WAS DEMONSTRATING TO THE PALESTINIANS THAT THE IDF WAS ALERT AND READY TO HIT - UNIFIL, SYRIA AND THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON NOTWITHSTANDING.

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TION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON NOTWITHSTANDING.

4. FROM THE ISRAELI POINT OF VIEW, THE RAID WAS NOT AN ISOLATED EVENT. IF A SUCCESSFUL PALESTINIAN ATTACK DOES OCCUR, THE GOI WILL RESPOND. HOWEVER, ISRAELI OPTIONS FOR RETALIATION AGAINST TERRORIST OPERATIONS HAVE BEEN REDUCED BECAUSE OF THE PRESENCE OF UNIFIL, AND ISRAELI REACTION WILL BE MORE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED THAN IN THE PAST. ALTHOUGH ISRAEL DOES NOT HAVE A STANDARD HISTORY OF RESPONSES TO ATTACKS BY THE PLO FROM SOUTHERN LEBANON, ONE DETERMINING FACTOR IN GOI DECISION MAKING APPEARS TO BE WHETHER CASUALTIES ARE SUSTAINED. KEEPING THIS IN MIND, AT LEAST THREE DIFFERENT SCENARIOS OF GOI REACTION CAN BE IDENTIFIED:

A. SHORTLY AFTER THE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL, ROCKETS FALL ON AN ISRAELI SETTLEMENT AND NO CASUALTIES ARE SUSTAINED. THE ISRAELI OPTIONS WOULD BE: 1) DO NOTHING; 2) LODGE STRONG PROTESTS WITH THE UN AND WITH THE US INDICATING THAT ISRAEL CANNOT TOLERATE SUCH ATTACKS AND PROTESTING THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF UNIFIL; AND 3) RESPOND BY FIRE AGAINST THE SUSPECTED LOCATIONS FROM WHERE THE PLO ATTACK ORIGINATED.

DOMESTIC PRESSURE WOULD MAKE THE FIRST OPTION UNLIKELY; THE
THIRD OPTION WOULD PROBABLY BE CONSIDERED DRASTIC GIVEN THAT
NO CASUALTIES OCCURED. THEREFORE, PROTEST WOULD SUFFICE.

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MILITARY ADDRESSEE HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

B. A ROCKET ATTACK ON A SETTLEMENT RESULTS IN SOME
CASUALTIES. THE OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE GOI DO NOT CHANGE,
NOR ITS MOST PROBABLE RESPONSE. HOWEVER THE INTENSITY OF
ISRAELI PROTESTS WOULD BE GREATER, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT
TO THEIR PRIVATE DEMARCHES TO WASHINGTON. THEY WOULD WARN
THAT A SECOND ATTACK COULD RESULT IN AN ACTIVE ISRAELI
RESPONSE.

C. A SECOND ROCKET ATTACK ON EITHER A SETTLEMENT OR A
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LARGER COMMUNITY RAISES ANOTHER COURSE OF ACTION. IF CASUALTIES WERE NOT SUSTAINED, THE OPTIONS WOULD REMAIN UNCHANGED. IN ALL LIKELIHOOD, SO WOULD THE ISRAELI RESPONSE, BUT GOI WARNINGS WOULD BE MORE STERN, STATING THAT A THIRD SUCH ATTACK, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER CASUALTIES WERE TAKEN, WOULD RESULT IN AN ISRAELI RETALIATION -- WHICH WOULD NOT BE FURTHER DEFINED. IF CASUALTIES WERE SUSTAINED IN A SECOND ATTACK, THE ISRAELIS WOULD MOST LIKELY LAUNCH A RETALIATORY STRIKE. THE IDF WOULD PROBABLY HIT TARGETS NORTH OF THE LITANI SO AS TO AVOID ANY INTERACTION WITH UNIFIL ELEMENTS. THEY WOULD NOT STAY AWAY FROM TARGETS SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY WERE IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO SYRIAN ELEMENTS-- INDEED, THE 8 JUNE RAID WAS ONLY THREE OR FOUR KMS FROM FORWARD SYRIAN TROOPS -- BUT WOULD BE HIGHLY SELECTIVE AND LIMIT THEIR ACTION TO CLEARLY DEFINED PALESTINIAN BASES, BUILDINGS AND EQUIPMENT, AVOIDING SYRIAN TROOPS. FUTURE RAIDS WOULD PROBABLY HAVE THE SAME CHARACTERISTICS AS THE 8 JUNE RAID -- CONDUCTED AT NIGHT BY HIGHLY TRAINED PARATROOPERS AND/OR NAVY SEAL FORCES, CONSISTING MAINLY OF OFFICERS. THERE WOULD BE NO INDISCRIMINATE BOMBING OR SHELLING AND DELIBERATE EFFORTS WOULD BE MADE TO AVOID CIVILIAN CASUALTIES. PROBABLE TARGETS INCLUDE TYRE, PLO STRONGHOLDS SUCH AS NABATIYA, AND PLO TARGETS IN BEIRUT ITSELF. THE OBJECTIVE WOULD BE TO KILL AS MANY PLO AS POSSIBLE, PREFERABLY LEADERSHIP.

5. THESE SCENARIOS ADDRESS ISRAELI RESPONSES TO THE MOST PROBABLE PALESTINIAN ACTION AGAINST ISRAEL AFTER JUNE 13, THAT OF ROCKET ATTACKS. BUT IF A MORE IMMEDIATE AND DEADLY PALESTINIAN ATTACK WERE TO TAKE PLACE, LIKE THAT OF THE MARCH 11 BUS AFFAIR, ALL BETS WOULD BE OFF HERE. IN THAT EVENT, WE WOULD NOT RULE OUT ATTEMPTED SURGICAL AIRSTRIKES BY THE IAF AGAINST SELECTED TARGETS IN PALESTINIAN CAMPS. THE ISRAELI PEOPLE WOULD EXPECT NO LESS AND THEY BEGIN

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GOVERNMENT WOULD BE UNLIKELY IN THE HEAT OF THE MOMENT TO HEED ANY COUNSELS OF RESTRAINT.
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